

WASHINGTON, DC—Today, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) commended President Barack Obama's executive order lifting the ban on federal funding for embryonic stem cell research. Since his first run for office, Congressman Sestak has been outspoken in his support of stem cell research, and in his first full week in Congress he co-sponsored legislation to expand federal research funding. Congressman Sestak has again co-sponsored similar legislation to increase funding in this critical field.

"Since first running for Congress, I have pledged to support legislation expanding embryonic stem cell research, which opens the promise of life for so many people," said Congressman Sestak. "That's why I commend President Obama for his decision, and why again I am proud to co-sponsor legislation expanding federal funding for this critical, groundbreaking research. Embryonic stem cell research may mean that there is a potential cure for over 3,000 Americans who die each day from diseases such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, heart disease, diabetes, multiple sclerosis, spinal cord injury, and stroke, as well as serving as replacements for cells or tissues, such as for those obliterated by radiation and chemotherapy in cancer patients. A year and a half ago, I retired from the U.S. Navy as my then four-year-old daughter was diagnosed with a malignant brain tumor. She is here today thanks to the wonderful medical treatment that she received from our nation's doctors and nurses, including high-dose chemotherapy with stem cell infusion."

In August of 2001, President George W. Bush banned the use of federal funding for research on embryonic stem cell lines not already in existence on that date. The executive order that President Obama signed today reverses that ban, which has no basis in science and was not required by any law. It directs the National Institutes of Health to support and conduct responsible, scientifically worthy human stem cell research, including human embryonic stem cell research—to the extent permitted by law. It also directs NIH to develop guidelines, within 120 days, on proceeding with research on newly developed stem cell lines. Furthermore, the Presidential memorandum directs the Office of Science and Technology Policy to develop a strategy for restoring scientific integrity to the government's decision-making process – from health care to energy policy and beyond.

H.R. 873, co-sponsored by Congressman Sestak, does the following:

- Increases the number of embryonic stem cell lines allowed to be used in federally-funded research, but only authorizes the use of stem cell lines generated from embryos that would otherwise be discarded by fertility clinics.
- Sets strict ethical guidelines under the guidance of the National Institutes of Health, including stipulating that embryos can be used only if the donors give their written consent and receive no money or other inducement in exchange for the embryos.
- Requires the Health and Human Services Secretary to report to Congress annually on federally funded embryonic stem cell research.

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of “Deep Blue,” the Navy’s anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the “Global War on Terrorism.” He served as President Clinton’s Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. Congress.